

File a Float Plan

- Inform a friend or relative where you are going, when and where you are departing and arriving. Your route and other pertinent information will enable someone to find you. We never plan on accidents but they do happen. Filing and adhering to a float plan will help if emergency personnel need to locate you.

Wear Your Life Jackets

- “Life jackets float . . . you don’t.” Life jackets save lives and are the most important piece of safety equipment in your boat. Make sure you know and follow the boating laws for your state regarding life jackets. A snug fit ensures the life jacket will not come off if you accidentally fall into the water. Children’s life jackets should also fit properly and be rated for their weight. The U.S. Coast Guard label affixed to the life jacket will aid in selecting the proper size. Frayed or damaged life jackets should be replaced.

Weather

- Monitor the local weather forecast before you begin your journey and throughout your trip. In the Midwest, storms may emerge abruptly. These storms are often accompanied by strong winds that can easily capsize a small craft. Lightning, heavy rains, or hail can turn a pleasant trip into a disaster. Watch the sky and be aware of your surroundings for signs of inclement weather. Head for shore at the first sign of severe weather.

Alcohol

- The combination of boating and alcohol is illegal and can prove deadly. Alcohol impairs judgment and reaction time and decreases your body’s ability to defend itself from hypothermia. If you reach for something to drink on a hot day, water is best. Have fun and avoid alcohol.

Reading the Missouri River

- The Missouri River is deep in some areas, but dotted with sandbars and shallow spots elsewhere. Snags and floating debris also present hazards that may be difficult to see. Varying river levels can expose or submerge hazards within a short period of time.
- Look for water areas with a slight ripple. This indicates sandbars, dikes or possible hazards close to the surface. Maps and charts may not necessarily show the location of sandbars that have shifted with the flow of the river.

Stopping Your Boat

- When stopping, make every attempt to turn your boat upstream into the current and cut the throttle to an idle. The throttle setting will vary with the speed of the current. This will hold your boat steady in the water without drifting into obstacles.
- If you anchor in the river, always remember to use a bowline to minimize the risk of being swamped by water coming over the transom or back of the boat. A danforth anchor is recommended for river use since it will bite and hold securely on the bottom. The anchor line should be at least seven times as long as the depth of the water in which the boat is moored.
- Never attempt to moor to stationary objects such as dikes and moored barges and never approach these objects from upstream. Swift water flowing around these objects creates very strong turbulence and undertow currents that may overturn your boat and pull you under.

Swimming/Tubing

- Swimming and tubing on the Missouri is extremely dangerous and is strongly discouraged. A river current normally 6-8 mph can quickly exhaust even the strongest swimmer. Inner tubes should never be used on the river. There’s no way to control them in the current and they pose problems with boats, especially on holidays and weekends when recreational traffic peaks.